

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 FDRE-00
HEW-04 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 HA-05 CA-01 SCS-06
EB-08 IO-13 NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 FBOE-00
A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 STE-01 OC-06 CCO-00 SP-02 SS-15
MED-02 PER-01 OCL-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 COME-00 /120 W
-----043885 071951Z /64

O 071840Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6519

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CARACAS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

ATO MIAMI IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1065

JOINT STATE/AID

CARACAS FOR RSO; SANTO DOMINGO FOR RMO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SOCI, ENRG, ABUD, SWEL, GY, AFSP, ABLD, ASUP, ASEC, APER

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

REF: GEORGETOWN 1058

1. GEORGE KING, MINISTER OF TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
(ALSO CO-CHAIRMAN OF GOG TASK FORCE DEALING WITH THE ELECTRIC
POWER CRISIS), CALLED ME IN THIS MORNING TO ASK FOR EMERGENCY
RELIEF ASSISTANCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE CURRENT POWER
SHORTAGE/WATER CRISIS. KING SAID HE WAS SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF
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PRIMMIN BURHAM AND SAID THAT BURNHAM WOULD HAVE TALKED TO
ME DIRECTLY HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR A SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT THIS
MORNING WHICH HE COULD NOT BREAK. ESSENTIALLY THE SITUATION
AS KING DESCRIBED IT IS AS FOLLOWS:

2. THE MAIN POWER PLANT FOR GEORGETOWN IS VIRTUALLY IN-
OPERATIVE AND WILL REMAIN IN THIS CONDITIION UNTIL ITS

BOILERS CAN BE REPLACED SOMETIME BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1978 AND MID-79. EMERGENCY POWER FOR GEORGETOWN HAS BEEN COMING OFF THE GENERATING FACILITY AT GARDEN OF EDEN. HOWEVER, THE TRANSMISSION LINE CONNECTING GARDEN OF EDEN WITH THE GEORGETOWN GRID HAS MALFUNCTIONED AT LEAST A HALF DOZEN TIMES WITHIN THE PAST 6 DAYS AND IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE POWER USING THIS LINK FOR OVER 6 HOURS AT ANY SINGLE TIME. AT BEST, KING POINTS OUT, THE GARDEN OF EDEN FACILITY IS NOT ABLE TO SUPPLY ALL OF GEORGETOWN BUT ONLY THOSE CRITICAL FACILITIES SUCH AS THE HOSPITALS, WATER PLANT, FLOUR MILLS, AND CERTAIN OTHER KEY LOCATIONS. HIS TASK FORCE HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND HAS ORDERED TWO 11 MEGAWATT GENERATORS TO BE PUT IN PLACE AT THE MAIN GEORGETOWN PLANT. THESE GENERATORS MUST COME BY SEA BECAUSE OF THEIR SIZE AND WEIGHT AND THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF THEIR INSTALLATION BEFORE MID-JUNE AT THE EARLIEST. THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OBVIOUSLY, ACCORDING TO KING, IS THE PROVISION OF SOME SORT OF STANDBY POWER DURING THIS INTERIM PERIOD. HE ASKED WHETHER OR NOT THE USG MIGHT HAVE A POWER BARGE WHICH COULD BE BROUGHT INTO THE PORT OF GEORGETOWN AND MOVED NEXT TO THE INOPERATIVE PLANT. FAILING THAT WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR USAF TO TRANSPORT URGENTLY TO GEORGETOWN ENOUGH SMALLER EMERGENCY GENERATORS SO THAT THE VARIOUS KEY INSTALLATIONS (HOSPITALS, FLOUR MILL, ETC) COULD BE KEPT SEPARATELY IN OPERATION. KING SAID
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THAT THEY HAD ALREADY APPROACHED THE LOCAL REP OF CATERPILLAR, WHO HAD OFFERED TO ROUND UP AS MANY AS 20 TO 25 300 KW GENERATING UNITS AND MAKE THEM AVAILABLE FOR SALE TO THE GOG. KING WONDERED IF THERE WERE ANY POSSIBILITY OF TRANSPORTING THESE GENERATORS BY MILITARY AIRCRAFT.

3. I ASKED KING WHETHER HIS GOVERNMENT WAS OFFICIALLY CERTIFY-
ING THE PRESENT SITUATION AS A DISASTER INFORMING HIM THAT THE USG HAD, OF COURSE, IN THE PAST PROVIDED CERTAIN ASSISTANCE TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS WHEN A DISASTER OCCURRED. KING REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. I TOLD KING I WOULD IMMEDIATELY COMMUNICATE HIS REQUEST TO WASHINGTON TO SEE WHAT IF ANYTHING MIGHT BE DONE TO ASSIST IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. I POINTED OUT TO HIM THAT THE MILITARY AIRLIFT COMMAND AND USAF WERE CONSTRAINED FROM PROVIDING AIRLIFT IN COMPETITION WITH REGULAR COMMERCIAL CARRIERS. KING RESPONDED THAT TIME WAS OF THE ESSENCE AND IF THESE GENERATORS WERE NOT IN PLACE WITHIN A MATTER OF FEW DAYS, THE PRESENT SITUATION WOULD DETERIORATE FURTHER AND BECOME VERY CRITICAL.

4. KING WENT ON TO SAY THAT THE GOG WOULD ALSO BE IN NEED OF EMERGENCY SUPPLIES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS INCLUDING MEDICINES, SOAP, AND BASIC FOODSTUFFS. THIS WAS DUE TO THE FACT THAT LOCAL MANUFACTURING HAD COME TO A COMPLETE HALT, AND SUPPLIES OF BASIC COMMODITIES, DUE TO GOVERNMENT'S BALANCE OF PAYMENT POSITION, WERE AVAILABLE ONLY IN LIMITED QUANTITIES AT ANY GIVEN TIME. HE REFERRED ALSO TO THE WATER PROBLEM WHICH HAS BECOME ACUTE THOUGH HE MADE NO SPECIFIC REQUEST REGARDING ASSISTANCE IN THIS AREA.

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FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 GEORGETOWN 1065

JOINT STATE/AID

CARACAS FOR RSO; SANTO DOMINGO FOR RMO

5. GIVEN THE CRITICAL SITUATION HE DESCRIBED I WONDERED ALOUD WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTE WOULD BE POSTPONING OR CANCELING HIS 24-DAY TRIP TO MOSCOW, NORTH KOREA, THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND UK SCHEDULED TO BEGIN APRIL 11. HE SAID THAT NO DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN ON THIS POINT, GOING ON TO SAY THAT LONDON WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT STOP ON THE TRIP, PARTICULARLY THE

TALKS WITH PRIMIN CALLAGHAN, AND IMPLYING THAT THE OTHER THREE STOPS WERE UNIMPORTANT. KING ASKED IF THE PRIMINISTER'S TRAVEL WOULD HAVE ANY EFFECT ON USG REACTION TO THE GOG'S REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. CONFIDENTIAL

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I TOLD HIM THAT USG HAD ALWAYS SHOWN ITSELF READY TO RESPOND TO DISASTERS ALL OVER THE GLOBE AT THE REQUEST OF VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS. I THEN ASKED KING IF THE GOG WAS ALSO REQUESTING EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS THE USSR, THE GDR, ETC. HE SAID THAT IN THE FIRST INSTANCE THEY WERE APPROACHING NEARBY GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAD BEEN TRADITIONAL AID DONORS, SUCH AS CANADA, THE UK AND THE USG, AND WHICH WERE MORE READILY ABLE TO FURNISH ASSISTANCE.

6. I CONCLUDED THE INTERVIEW BY ASKING KING IF HE WOULD BE IN CHARGE OF THIS EMERGENCY SITUATION ASSISTANCE. HE REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE. I ASKED HIM TO KEEP ME INFORMED AS THE SITUATION DEVELOPED AND I WOULD CONVEY TO HIM THE USG RESPONSE ASAP.

7. COMMENT: IT SEEMS APPARENT THAT THE POWER/WATER SITUATION IN GEORGETOWN AND ITS SPIN-OFF SUCH AS THE ALMOST COMPLETE SHUTDOWN OF ALL MANUFACTURING AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY HAS REACHED CRITICAL PROPORTIONS. KING'S DEMARCHE AND THE CANDID WAY IN WHICH HE PUT IT (E.G., HE ADMITTED THAT THE FAILURE OF THE GEORGETOWN PLANT HAD BEEN DUE TO POOR MAINTENANCE AND POOR PLANNING OF THE CITY'S POWER NEEDS) PROBABLY UNDERSTATE, IF ANYTHING, THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION. THE GUYANESE ECONOMY IN THE BEST OF TIMES IS FRAGILE DUE TO RESTRAINTS ON IMPORTS BECAUSE OF A LACK OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUING ENCROCHMENT ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR. IT IS NOW BADLY TATTERED AND THREADBARE. CERTAINLY, THERE IS A CLEAR NEED TO RESTORE ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN GEORGETOWN IN TERMS OF ELECTRIC POWER AND THE WATER SUPPLY. IMMEDIATE CONCERNS ARE COMMUNITY-WIDE RISKS TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND THE CONFIDENTIAL

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IMMINENT DANGER OF A CATASTROPHIC FIRE WHICH MIGHT BREAK OUT IN THE TINDER DRY WOODEN STRUCTURES OF GEORGETOWN AND OVERPOWER THE GOVERNMENT'S FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITY. I HAVE ASKED AID DIRECTOR BOORADY TO POSTPONE HER TRIP TO WASHINGTON FOR THE MOMENT SO THAT WE

ARE ABLE TO RESPOND IN ANY WAY WE CAN. I WOULD LIKE IN THE FIRST INSTANCE REPLIES TO KING'S QUESTIONS: 1. IS THERE ANY POWER BARGE OR OTHER FLOATING GENERATOR IN THE 10-20 MW CLASS AVAILABLE IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA THAT COULD BE BROUGHT INTO GEORGETOWN IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS TO ONE WEEK? 2. WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE TO FLY IN SMALLER GENERATORS TO PROVIDE SERVICE AT THE VARIOUS CRITICAL INSTALLATIONS AROUND GEORGETOWN? 3. DESPITE THE FACT THAT APPROACH HAS ALREADY BEEN MADE TO CATERPILLAR BY GOG, WOULD IT NOW BE POSSIBLE TO REPLACE OR SUPPLEMENT ANY SUCH ORDER WITH SURPLUS GENERATING EQUIPMENT ON A LOAN BASIS?
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